

EPISODES IN RURAL MODERNIZATION: PROBLEMS IN THE BIMAS PROGRAM

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Many governments in developing countries have designed programs to increase food production but not all plans have proved successful in their execution. To some extent the problem may relate to the process of planning itself. Government plans define a set of programs which it is believed will stimulate economic growth in the rural sector. Such plans obviously include options thought conducive to increased crop yields. Indeed, it may be the explicit intention of the planners to restrain the peasant from certain options that are considered unproductive and to redirect him towards new and more "productive" patterns of behavior. The government administrator in the field must explain the plan and convince the peasant to act within its limits. The peasant's response may not be entirely positive, he may feel more confident and secure in following traditional agricultural practices. This sets the stage for a conflict between the administrator--who wants to implement plans which establish definite limits upon action--and the peasant--who attempts to preserve his autonomy and thereby his capacity to follow his own self-defined pattern of choices.

The dogged resistance of the peasantry, impoverished and conservative in outlook, can easily sap the patience if not subvert the economic plans of a government bent upon introducing modern methods of agricultural production. Under pressure to achieve production targets, officials frequently resort to more subtle tactics of bureaucratic intimidation to quell peasant opposition. The very fact that such bureaucratic methods can and are frequently employed is indicative of a structural imbalance, characteristic of many new nations, by which a dynamic urban-centered bureaucracy holds sway over an unorganized and languid rural populace. More importantly, however, this imbalance can be reflected in the very process of economic and social planning itself. Urban technocrats often base plans on the most modern technology without much forethought about how such innovations can be adapted to existing rural conditions. Even if technical and administrative policies are carefully designed to take into account rural conditions, the interests of the urban-dominated economy may still prevent any attempt to provide the economic incentives necessary for a positive peasant response.

One must acknowledge that peasant opposition to participation in government programs may have some basis in political, technological and economic issues and cannot be set aside as another instance of "irrational" commitment to the immutable laws of village existence. This is not to dismiss entirely the impact of village traditions and cultural factors or their role in inhibiting the adoption of more effective methods of agricultural production. The current critical contest and dispute between peasant and administrator in Indonesia resulted from plans being implemented in the rural sector which were formulated in an urban-dominated society.

I

In the post-colonial era, Indonesian political leaders have frequently set self-sufficiency in rice production as a national goal, and several government programs have been undertaken to achieve this objective. This was particularly true in the 1960's as increasingly large quantities of foreign currency were expended to purchase rice on the world market because domestic production was insufficient. Indonesian leaders have been quite aware of the potentially disastrous consequences both economically and politically should they ignore consumption needs, particularly in urban areas, for a basic commodity like rice. Nevertheless, the goal of attaining self-sufficiency has continued to elude government administrators.

Under the five year plan of 1969 (Repelita), central attention in plans for modernizing the rural economy was focussed on rice production. President Suharto has been unbending in the commitment that, by 1973, Indonesia will be self-sufficient in rice. The current program to achieve this goal is named Bimas and is the most discussed and controversial aspect of contemporary public policy in Indonesia.¹ Press coverage on this program alone has far exceeded that given to the entire five year plan. The program, by virtue of its size, requires the participation of millions of peasant farmers, particularly on Java.² The government has saturated the more fertile areas of Java with credits in the form of fertilizers, pesticides, seeds and other items needed to increase rice production. Several foreign firms from Germany, Switzerland and Japan have contracted with the Indonesian government to supply these items, and, in some cases, they have participated in the administration of the program itself. The process of implementing the Bimas program has highlighted some serious and pervasive problems in government administration. Few administrative reforms were undertaken to prepare government organizations to carry out the Bimas program. As a result departments continue to lack the personnel and skills required by such

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1. Bimas as used in this discussion refers specifically to the Bimas Gotong Rojong Program, the national economic development program in rice production, the goals for which were developed in 1968 and are spelled out in the five year plan.

The guidelines for the Bimas program were first formulated by the Institut Pertanian Bogor (Institute of Agriculture in Bogor) and tested by students from that Institute in a pilot project in 1963-64 in the district of Krawang, West Java. The initial name given to the project was Demas (Demonstrasi Massal or Mass Demonstration). In 1964-65, the project was financed and sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and the size of the program expanded. In 1965, when the government adopted the project as the primary program in rice production, the name was changed to Bimas (Bimbingan Massal or Mass Guidance) and was referred to as Bimas Nasional or National Bimas. In 1968, when foreign firms assumed some responsibility for the program, a new name was given to this program: Bimas Gotong Rojong. Bimas Gotong Rojong is now considered a program separate and distinct from Bimas Nasional. For the past two years, efforts at increasing rice production have been centered in the Bimas Gotong Rojong program rather than the Bimas Nasional program.

2. The Bimas program has been expanded to include parts of Sumatra and Sulawesi, but its emphasis continues to be upon increasing rice production in Java.

a massive agricultural development program. These problems soon became apparent as the Bimas Gotong Rojong program began operations, in the wet season of 1968-69, and then expanded, during the 1969 dry season and again in the 1969-70 wet season. For example, poor communications and a weak government bureaucracy contributed to the tardy delivery of the Bimas fertilizer and pesticides to the villages. A shortage of extension workers made it impossible to instruct and supervise the peasant adequately in the use of fertilizer and pesticides. As a result, the peasant frequently did not attain the promised increase in rice yields, and, moreover, he was now saddled with the repayment of the credit that the government extended to him. Many peasants have been unwilling or unable to repay the Bimas credits.³ For many reasons, then, peasant dissatisfaction with the Bimas program has increased. Some of this stems from deficiencies intrinsic to the program. From the peasant's point of view, the government has been too inflexible. Based on years of experience in his particular area, the peasant has his own ideas about what he needs to increase rice yields and also how much should be used. The government, however, insists upon giving the same standard package for all areas allowing only limited variations in its contents. From the administrative point of view, standardization is necessary because the government does not have the capacity to tailor specific programs to meet individual peasant needs. Frequently the peasant does not get either the kind or amount of assistance which he believes he needs.

If the peasant was so dissatisfied with the program, why then did a substantial portion of the peasantry participate in Bimas? The press in Java has been quick to raise this question and has charged that force was used to override peasant opposition to the Bimas program. Press reports describing actual incidents in which force was used are corroborated by other sources. Obviously, government administrators and peasants have disagreed sharply about the policy and tactics of rural modernization.

Members of the civil service, particularly the *pamong pradja* have admitted privately that they frequently had to coerce farmers to participate in the Bimas program, though they rarely used overt force. The intonation used in a verbal command, or the general style of communication between the official and the peasant is enough to indicate that the government will not tolerate any public opposition. In the early stages of the program, therefore, the peasantry accepted Bimas. Such resignation is perhaps consistent with village tradition, but it was reinforced by the general feeling of insecurity and fear that followed the abortive communist coup of 1965. In the face of repeated disappointment with the results of the Bimas program, however, inhibitions against open dissent began to give way. The role of the press in this process should not be underestimated. It made public what many were thinking in private. Press criticism of the program, in turn, encouraged the political parties and the peasantry to become more aggressive.

The undercurrent of frustration with the Bimas program grew throughout 1969, and became quite visible and potent at the beginning

3. It is important to mention that peasants frequently did not repay the credit even when yields were superior.

of the 1970 dry season. Peasant resistance caused the government to try harder to increase communication with the countryside. In official circles, there was a growing awareness that more resources would have to be allocated to explain the program to the farmer and persuade him to accept it.

While conducting research on the administration of the Bimas program in West Java, the author was able to participate in and observe the activities of Bimas officials as they tried to mobilize peasant support for the program. A team of government officials, representing the various agencies involved in Bimas at the *kabupaten* (district) level, were instructed to visit several *ketjamatan* (sub-districts) and meet with their officials and peasants. The team was supposed to explain Bimas and then enlist the peasants' participation. Frequently, the kabupaten officials had already enrolled these ketjamatan in the Bimas program prior to the team's visit, and the arrival of the kabupaten team often represented the first effort to solicit peasant support. The kabupaten officials usually visited one ketjamatan a day, arriving in the early morning and returning home in the late afternoon. Five or six officials would comprise a team: one or two officials from the bupati's staff, one or two from the agriculture department, one from PN Pertani (the government agency responsible for trucking the Bimas supplies to the village) and one from Bulog (Biro Urusan Logistik, the government agency responsible for the rice price support program and for collection of credit repayments).

Most of the visits occurred in the months of March and April 1970. It is important to contact the peasants during these months so that Bimas deliveries can be made before dry season planting begins, in May and June. The peasants who attended the meetings, ideally, had been elected by the villagers. But in fact they were frequently appointed by the village chiefs (*lurah*) to represent their village in negotiations with Bimas officials.⁴ Those selected were called "unit leaders," and they were responsible for administering the Bimas project set for their village. This included making a list of participants, finding out from the various agencies when the Bimas materials would be delivered and then distributing these to the individual peasants. The unit leader performed a vital role; his position constituted the critical link between the impersonal bureaucracy, with its chain of command from Djakarta to the sub-district, and the peasant in the village, a communal entity often not fully incorporated into the state administrative structure.

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4. This departure from official instructions occurred for several reasons. Frequently the *lurah* wanted to select one of his confidants, either as a favor or to avoid the inconvenience of assembling the farmers for an election. There were also instances where the farmers would elect a unit leader, but for some reason he failed to meet the qualifications required by the *lurah* or the agriculture department. A replacement would then be selected by the *lurah*. As the Bimas program became less popular, farmers became less willing to serve as unit leaders. This obliged the *lurah* to select candidates from some of his more compliant constituents.

The following is a report of what occurred in one kabupaten when the teams visited the ketjamatan. The particular kabupaten is located in the Priangan, the southern mountainous area of West Java. In these less accessible areas, villagers have been able, historically, to preserve a greater degree of autonomy from government control. The reports illuminate quite well certain problems with the Bimas program, the approach which government officials take in implementing the program and the reaction of the peasantry to such government assistance. These formal encounters between middle level, urban officials and the subsistence level rural populace provide an insight into the frustrations that arise when a government, intent upon altering time-honored patterns of land use, confronts a recalcitrant and tradition-bound peasantry.

II

Early in the morning I drove to the ketjamatan where I was to meet with the agricultural extension worker. Along with him and the tjamat, I went to the meeting hall next to the tjamat's office; here the special team from the kabupaten would explain the Bimas program for the current dry season. The meeting hall, like most buildings in the area, was a simple wooden structure with a peaked tile roof and a few glass panes for lighting. It consisted of one large room, approximately forty feet square. On the plank floor were five or six wooden benches upon which sat about fifteen to twenty farmers. The farmers were all very lean and a little bent, appearing emaciated in their well-worn and drab-looking clothes. Some were young but most appeared over thirty-five. A few uniformed soldiers were sitting together on one of the benches. All were facing a large table at the front. Around this table sat the visiting team of officials and the members of the ketjamatan Muspida,⁵ in this instance, the tjamat, the local police chief and the local military commander. The meeting was opened by the tjamat, a striking and articulate man in his late thirties, a drop-out from the law faculty in Bandung. He had already served for ten years as tjamat and he introduced the kabupaten team with confidence and poise. Next he made a few remarks about Bimas. He stressed that only those villages with a good water supply could participate in Bimas during the dry season planting. Barring any dispute (*sengketa*) over water rights, the participating villages had already been chosen. He reminded the farmers that the fertilizer and other materials were not a gift from the government and that each individual peasant was responsible for the repayment of this credit. He underscored the fact that in deciding whether or not to accept Bimas aid, personal (*pribadi*) interests should not take

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5. Muspida (Musjawarah Pimpinan Daerah or Regional Leadership Council) is a formal organizational device designed to coordinate the activities of civil, police and military authorities at the regional level. The specific function of each member remains unclear and this vagueness has left the door open for individual council members to define their own role. Not infrequently, as a result, a regional police or military commander gains the upper hand in the administration of civil affairs. Civil officials, obviously, are irritated by such encroachment upon their domain and Muspida continues to be a controversial aspect of regional government in Indonesia.

priority. "Do not just express your personal opinions on the Bimas matter, but open your minds to the condition of peasants in general. Our peasants are in a very weak economic position. Bimas should therefore be considered a responsibility (*tugas*) of village cooperation (*gotong-rojong*). The peasant should feel obliged to accept Bimas. The government is trying to assist us and so we should try to assist the government."

The tjamat then introduced the kabupaten representative of the Department of Agriculture. This official, an older man, stood and read from the bupati's letter of instruction (*surat keputusan*) which described in some detail the conditions of the Bimas program for the next dry season. The most important part was a description of the amount and kinds of materials (specifically, fertilizer, seeds and pesticides) to be provided, their cost and the terms of repayment to the government.⁶ After some fifteen minutes, he stopped reading. He said that the contents of the Bimas package could not be varied too much because of the problems this would create in the administration of the program. He also stressed that the village unit could not be smaller than fifty hectares.⁷

The agricultural official then invited another member of the team to address the assembled peasants. This was a prominent farmer (*tokoh tani*), well known for his use of modern techniques in rice cultivation.⁸ Well dressed and meticulously groomed, his urbane appearance contrasted sharply with that of the typical Indonesian peasant. (I learned later that, besides his farm, he also owned a home in Bandung, and that several of his children were living there while attending the University of Padjadjaran.) He started by saying,

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6. The usual pattern in these meetings was for one official to read the formal letter of instruction from the bupati. Though a dull and tedious task, it had definite and important advantages. First, it emphasized that the instructions emanated from an important and authoritative source, i.e., the bupati. Second, by reading the instructions, the local official conveyed the impression that he was compelled to follow the commands and that, therefore, the peasant should not hold him accountable for the program. Third, since there were no copies of the instructions for distribution, this verbal communication was often the only detailed information which the peasant received.
 7. Trying to profit from economies-of-scale, the government established fifty hectares of contiguous plots as the minimum area to qualify for Bimas. Identified as the "block system," this stipulation was a bone of contention between farmer and administrator. Some farmers felt that the regulation was a form of pressure, compelling those who opposed Bimas to accept it anyway in order not to deny their neighbors the program's benefits.
 8. Prominent peasants were invited to accompany the teams. This was in response to pressure by local parliamentary bodies demanding more opportunity for peasant participation in the implementation of the program. Bimas officials favored the idea, hoping it would enhance the program in the eyes of the peasants. The legislative bodies, however, wanted more peasant participation in order to curb bureaucratic excesses.

"Bimas really means social guidance (*bimbingan masyarakat*) because the problem of rice production is really a social problem. If all the peasants could just work together the problem could be overcome." He felt that the marketing of rice needed to be improved, and he implied the government should assist more in this regard. He also suggested that the floor price in the new government rice subsidy should be raised to a level more compatible with peasant economic needs. Finally he was disturbed at reports that many peasants were not repaying the credit they had received through the Bimas program. He said he did not know what to make of these reports and did not yet know if the peasant was responsible for this failure or if perhaps other parties were involved. In spite of these problems, he asserted that the peasants should implement the government programs. He asked rhetorically, "Why would a peasant want to reject the Bimas program?" He himself had participated in the program and had had some very high yields. "We, like the officials (*petugas*), are responsible for the implementation of Bimas. We want the government to succeed."

The third member of the bupati's team to address the peasant assemblage was a man in his late twenties who represented PN Pertani, the government firm responsible for transporting the Bimas materials to the village. He said a few words of recognition to the Muspida and then launched into his talk by saying that PN Pertani was encountering many complications (*simpang siur*). He said that in one village in the ketjamatan, when PN Pertani delivered the fertilizer, no one knew who was the leader and who were the members of the unit. "It was not clear who was responsible for the unit. In general, PN Pertani is not getting any advance information on road conditions or village storage facilities or even a complete list of participating peasants." He stressed that the unit leaders must provide this information. "Up until now the unit leaders have been too passive. They should come directly to the local PN Pertani warehouse to request the Bimas materials. Sometimes the unit leader did not come and sometimes a person came that we did not know. We could only trust that he was submitting an honest list of applicants. Frequently the form indicating that the village had received the materials was signed by the wrong person. Then we were forced to return to see if the delivery had been made. Sometimes the unit leader doesn't inform the lurah that the material has arrived. Then an irate lurah shows up at our office asking why the delivery has not been made. Moreover, there are times when the unit leaders come to our office to request deliveries too late. Obviously we cannot be blamed for this." The tone of his voice and the manner of his speech clearly showed his annoyance with these problems. At several intervals he looked in the direction of the Muspida members and asked their forbearance for his discussion of such delicate matters. At one point he awkwardly turned to the tjamat and apologized for bringing the whole thing up at this meeting. He concluded by saying that "it was improper (*tidak tepat*) to mention these things but in this instance past experience could serve as a good teacher."

Next, the official from the Department of Agriculture completed reading the formal letter of instruction from the bupati. He then invited questions from the peasants. Three peasants raised their hands. The official first took their names down and then let them ask their questions. The first to stand was a little old man who

probably weighed no more than a hundred pounds. It seemed as if only his *pitji* hat and his tattered but well-kept white shirt kept his sometimes tremulous frame from being engulfed by spotless but oversized baggy trousers. His stooped and anemic appearance was deceptive, for as soon as he spoke, one realized that he possessed a steadfast and iron-willed spirit. With exceptionally few utterances of deference, by Indonesian standards, to the team and ketjamatan leaders, he politely came directly to his point. His eyes were intently fixed upon the tokoh tani, who a few minutes before had asked why peasants would want to reject the Bimas program. The old man, as his talk evolved, was obviously ruffled by this remark and its implication that peasants were being less than rational if they rejected Bimas. He started by saying that he had participated in Bimas and that his yields had been low. "I then had to divide this between my tenants and also repay the government for the Bimas credits. This left me very little for my own needs." He invited the tokoh tani to come to his farm and see for himself. The tokoh tani laughed anxiously, as did everyone else; his silent but incredulous facial expression seemed to ask why the old peasant was putting him on like this. Why should the old man have taken his remark so seriously? The old fellow, now gazing at the entire team, went on to say that Bimas was too burdensome (*terlalu berat*). "The yields are not sufficient to pay back the credit and leave me a satisfactory profit. I only want a portion of the Bimas package. I do not want the pesticides. The last time I used the Bimas pesticide, it killed the fish in the neighboring ponds."⁹ He finished by saying that before one could expect a substantial increase in yields more attention would have to be given to improving the local irrigation system.¹⁰

The agricultural official gave a direct and brief rejoinder to these questions. He said there was little he could do about the price of the package contents. "These decisions are made higher up in the administrative hierarchy." Likewise, he could not change the regulation that the peasant must receive the full package.

A second peasant stood and asked some questions. He said that he would like to know on what basis the parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakjat) determined the price of the package. He felt it was too theoretical. The peasant only needs fertilizer. He said that his area was free of pests. He requested that the pesticides be left out. He also felt that the technical assistance fee should not be paid by the peasant.¹¹ He reiterated that the package price was too high and

9. The killing of fish in local ponds by Bimas pesticides frequently occurred in West Java. Some of the pesticides were highly toxic and, without proper precautionary measures, leakage from the treated areas entered fish ponds.
10. The new high yield seeds supplied in the Bimas package are more dependent than are conventional seeds upon a well-managed water supply. In many areas of West Java, Bimas projects were introduced before restoration of irrigation systems which had fallen into disrepair. This reduced the yield of the new seeds.
11. Included in the price of the package was a fee assessed for technical assistance. This was primarily used to pay salaries of technical advisers employed by foreign firms to plan and implement the Bimas program. The peasants found these fees objectionable because

did not accord with the actual income of the peasant. He then went on to ask what he was supposed to do for his village. "At the beginning of the last wet season (1969-1970), the Bimas materials were delivered, but only 50 percent of the peasants used them. The others did not want to participate in the program and now the village still has a large quantity of unused fertilizer and pesticides on hand. I do not know what to do with this."¹²

The agricultural representative, now more diffident, responded by insisting that pesticides were not meant for use only when a rice field was attacked by pests. He stressed that pesticides should be used as a preventive measure before the pests appeared and therefore were an essential part of the package. He then went to the chalk board where the tjamat a few minutes before had listed the cost of the individual items. He said that the technical assistance fee was used to pay the salaries of the Japanese agricultural experts who were providing technical advice for the Bimas projects. It was also used for Indonesian university students who worked with the farmers and to finance the demonstration plots in the project areas.¹³ The agricultural official then asked in disbelief if it was really true that the peasants had only used 50 percent of the Bimas material for the past wet season. The peasant simply replied that this was indeed the case. The official, annoyed and dismayed, reminded the peasant that several weeks of wet season planting time still remained and he urged that the village use the remaining material.

At this point the tjamat interrupted and asked that he be allowed to say a few words. He was obviously disturbed and piqued at the expressions of dissatisfaction coming from his constituents; now the revelation that one of his villages had been woefully negligent in its use of Bimas materials stirred him to speak. He immediately launched into an impassioned and demonstrative speech, admonishing the peasants for their shortsighted and irresponsible behavior and exhorting them to push on with the program. He insisted that land had a social function. "It is not a personal possession that can be used at will by the owner." He urged them to discharge their obligations as landowners because it was up to them to produce sufficient food for the population at large. He went on to ask the peasants about the total number of inhabitants in the ketjamatan in 1940 and the total hectares of cultivated rice. He fired off an answer himself, giving the statistics and then asking for the situation in 1970. One of the peasants responded with data which

they did not receive any direct and visible assistance from these advisers. It only served to arouse their suspicion that perhaps the payment of the fee was not being used for its avowed purpose.

12. In the wet season of 1969-70, in many villages in West Java Bimas materials lay neglected in village warehouses because peasants failed to take their allotment. These peasants refused to participate even though local government authorities had already enrolled the village.
13. Students from the agricultural faculties at several universities in West Java were assigned to work with the peasants during the 1970 dry season. Part of the technical assistance fee was used to pay their expenses while they lived in the villages.

indicated an enormous increase in population but, because of urbanization, a substantial decrease in hectareage. The difference over the thirty-year period was so large it provoked laughter at the absurdity of the current condition as measured by the past.

Undaunted, the tjamat pleaded, "We desperately need to improve rice production. The government wants more responsibility (*kewadjiban*) on the part of the peasant and less concern with personal rights (*hak-hak*). When the targets for rice production are achieved, then the peasant can worry about the pursuit of his rights. If your yield is four tons, try to increase it. Last week there were twenty births and only five deaths. The peasants are increasing the population and thus it is their responsibility to increase production." He asked them if the *pantja usaha* had been fully implemented and they answered that it had not.¹⁴ He lamented that it was natural to choose the easy road (*djalan jang enteng*). "If we had followed this pattern we would have never had a revolution or won our nationhood. It is natural to want few responsibilities and many rights. The experts say we can achieve four tons, but as human beings we say we can only reach two. If the doctor prescribes three pills a day it is natural for us to take only two."

He went on to say that the peasants were still following a free-for-all competitive system (*sistim balap*) in planting their rice. "Everyone plants according to his own interests and thus there is no regulation in the use of irrigation water. Because of this, villages more conveniently located near the irrigation system get more water and therefore more crops per year than other villages. Yet everyone has to pay the same tax. We must have better organization and leadership among the peasants in order to surmount this problem." He told of one village that had built a dam cutting water off from an adjacent village and exclaimed that this had to be stopped.

The tjamat berated the peasants for coming late to PN Pertani to get materials. He said that he was disappointed with the reports he was receiving from the farmers. He wanted accurate reports. "We need honest farmers as well as honest administrators." Fertilizer on the local market was less expensive than that provided in the Bimas package, because some farmers falsified their reports, saying they had one hectare of land when they only had one-half, and then sold the surplus to local vendors.

He pondered aloud why peasants were more disciplined in their repayment of debts to local money-lenders than of the Bimas credits. Again he mentioned the burgeoning population and growing unemployment and appealed to the peasants to work harder in order to make the program a success. He concluded by announcing the number of hectares

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14. Pantja Usaha, the Five-Fold Way, is a well-known and frequently-voiced slogan that refers to the five ways to increase rice production: (1) use of high yielding seeds; (2) proper fertilizer application; (3) adoption of improved cultivation practices; (4) control of pests and diseases; and (5) efficient use of irrigation water.
 15. Many peasants who received Bimas materials sold a portion on the open market.

that would be included in the local Bimas program. He said the quota was larger than last time and that the peasant would have to work harder to achieve this goal.

Undeterred, the old peasant who had raised the first question calmly requested that he be heard again. The visiting agriculture official said that he did not have much time but that the man could say a few words. In a very contrite manner, the old fellow asked that his request be reviewed (*tindjau kembali*). He still felt that the program was too much of a burden upon the peasant.

The meeting was about to be adjourned but the local agricultural extension worker asked to say a few words. This official, a bright young man, had a reputation for being a competent and dynamic civil servant. He stood and urged the peasants not to reject the Bimas program. He emphasized that Bimas represented an effort in mutual self-help (*gotong rojong*). He felt everything had been clarified by the letter of decision from the bupati and seemed annoyed that the attending peasants did not know about its contents, as if this somehow reflected upon his performance as an extension worker. One peasant remarked that they had not yet seen the letter. The extension worker retorted, "I cannot do all the footwork; it is up to the peasants to take more initiative in informing themselves about the program. The peasant should shoulder more responsibility for the administrative work."

At this point the meeting was adjourned. The old peasant went directly to the tokoh tani and, with reticence and deference, apologized for his remarks. They engaged in the traditional gesture of respect, the tokoh tani retaining his hold of the peasant's hand, gently drawing him near and then putting his arm around his shoulder. A warm exchange of words ensued.

The peasants had made their exit by now, but several of the visiting team members and the tjamat remained seated at the front table. The tjamat lamented that because his ketjamatan had become so urbanized he had little time to spend supervising the Bimas program. The tokoh tani remarked that the government floor price on rice was too low. The others agreed that it needed to be raised in order to provide an incentive to the peasant to increase his production. The tjamat said that although the government was more interested than before in improving the lot of the peasant, the Bimas program had yet to accomplish this goal. "There are a lot of problems with the program and it is not popular with the peasants." He feared that their discontent with the program would be directed at conscientious men like himself who represented the civil bureaucracy. Then in a more pensive mood, but without obvious forethought, he observed that this could contribute to the return of the BTI.¹⁶

16. BTI or Barisan Tani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasant Organization) mobilized peasant support for the communist movement. It was destroyed along with other communist groups in the aftermath of the abortive 1965 coup.

III

On the second visit, the team members were different from those I had accompanied on the first visit. Together we crowded into a small jeep and for the next hour travelled along a winding road before finally arriving at the tjamat's office. We were led into the public meeting hall next to the office. It was a small structure still under construction with dirt floors and wooden benches. At one end of the room, behind a waist-high partition, the team was seated along with the ketjamatan Muspida. On the other side of the partition thirty to forty farmers sat on rows of wooden benches. Like the other farmers, their gaunt and unexpressive faces betrayed their hard existence. Several among them were obvious because of their well-groomed appearance. Two were lurah from the two villages that were prospective recipients of the Bimas program. Two others were also conspicuous by virtue of their more polished appearance. These two soon proved the most active participants in the meeting, and I discovered later that they were young university trained teachers from the local school system.

The tjamat stood and opened the meeting with the announcement that the lurah should come to his office next week to receive instructions about levying the land tax. The tjamat, his voice barely audible, seemed noticeably insecure in his position of authority. He was under the age of thirty and had recently graduated from the tjamat school in Bandung. It was his second year as a member of the civil service. He provided a sharp contrast with the more mature and self-confident posture of the army and police representatives of the local Muspida, who sat next to him. The tjamat introduced the members of the team. The first member to speak was an official from the bupati's office. He was also a young man, a recent graduate of the tjamat school in Bandung, who, until transferred to the bupati's office, had served two years as a tjamat. He calmly explained that, "It is very important for the peasant to understand the goal of the Bimas program. The population is increasing and food is needed to support it. The government must increase rice production." He concluded with the statement that, "The government is trying transmigration and birth control, but this is not sufficient to overcome the population problem. The Bimas program constitutes a critical part of the effort."

At this point, one of the young school teachers asked for an agenda of the meeting. The kabupaten official obligingly listed a five-point agenda on the chalk board. The school teacher persisted, asking for a clarification on point five of the agenda. Point five was listed as "general survey" (*pandangan umum*). The teacher stressed that he wanted to make sure that the peasants had a chance to ask questions, and he requested that point five be changed to "questions and answers" (*tanja-djawab*). The official eagerly complied, and then reassured the teacher that the peasants would have a chance to inquire about the program. He stressed that the meeting would be conducted in a democratic manner and apologized for the partition separating the team from the peasants.

Another kabupaten official rose and gave a lengthy explanation of the Bimas program. He read from the bupati's letter of instruction and diagrammed the Bimas organizational structure on the chalk board, defining the role of each participating agency. He concluded

by stressing the need for the perfection of the pantja usaha as a means of improving farming techniques. At this point several peasants abruptly interposed questions. One said that in the past the lurah had announced that the village would receive Bimas and thus many peasants felt compelled to accept the program. He wanted to know if this would be repeated. The kabupaten official assured him that compulsion would not be used. Apparently not content with this response, one of the school teachers inquired about the issue of coercion and metaphorically compared the peasant to a patient who needed an injection. He asserted that, "The patient would voluntarily submit himself for treatment and that the same should apply to the Bimas program." The official agreed and said that he welcomed criticism concerning the program. Another peasant said he was afraid that if they rejected Bimas it would be interpreted as an attack on the five year plan. He said his lurah had been the one who submitted the request for Bimas, and he implied that this did not reflect the desires of the peasants.

The team member from the agriculture department then rose to address the peasants. He stressed that the decision to have Bimas was not just the choice of a lurah or a tjamat. "Bimas is a national effort. The government intends to achieve a balance between population growth and food production." He then launched into a lengthy technical explanation of the pantja usaha and its application to rice farming. He was followed by an official from PN Pertani who gave a brief explanation of the role of his agency in the delivery of Bimas materials.

The meeting had now reached point five of the agenda, the question and answer period. One of the school teachers quickly rose and opened a folder of newspaper clippings. For the next twenty minutes he quoted excerpts from President Suharto's speeches concerning the Bimas program. He was quite emotional; his aggressive and vehement manner contrasted sharply with the usually subdued way of speaking in Sundanese society. The excerpts he quoted were related to two themes. One, that the peasant needed an incentive in the form of an effective price support policy, and two, that force should not be used in the implementation of the program. There should be a dialogue between the peasant and the government so that the program could be executed in a democratic manner. After reading the excerpts, he spoke directly with the team. "The team has only mentioned the positive aspects of the Bimas program. Everything you said was just great, but it was in direct contradiction with what has actually happened in our ketjamatan. We have already participated in the Bimas program but at no time have we received any assistance from the agricultural extension service." He then opened his file again and read a detailed definition of the pantja usaha, after explaining that he had gotten this from the Agriculture Institute in Bogor. He reminded the team that all five elements of the pantja usaha must be included in the program. As if to assuage his own anxiety about this bluntness, he reiterated that the meeting could only be productive if he continued to speak frankly (*blak-blakan*).

He then read a report, which he said came from the local land department, which analyzed the soil composition of his ketjamatan. The report indicated that the soil was deficient in phosphate. But so far, the Bimas program had not included this in the package, though it would have to do so if rice production were to be increased. He concluded by requesting that a team of civil servants be sent as

observers in order to reduce the chances for corruption in local Bimas administration. He then returned to his original point that the agricultural extension service needed vast improvement. "The Bimas program could be improved through field demonstrations. This would help overcome peasant dissatisfaction."

The other school teacher now stood and began to talk about his own past experiences with Bimas. In his observations of the program, he had never seen any extension service given to the peasant. "The officials are only concerned that we accept Bimas; they give no assistance on how to use the fertilizer, seed, etc. In some cases peasants are even intimidated into participation. Some instructions are given to the officials and unit leaders on how to use the materials but this information is never conveyed to most peasants." He concluded by saying that in order to organize the Bimas program properly in this ketjamatan, it would be necessary to cancel Bimas for the upcoming dry season and concentrate instead on adequately instructing the peasant for the following year.

Again the agricultural official on the team rose to defend the program. He said it was difficult to provide such instruction because there were only one or two extension workers per ketjamatan. "According to the records, this ketjamatan had the best potential for increased production [the implication being that the peasants should therefore not be so dependent upon outside assistance]. Last year the extension service did not have the funds to conduct courses for the farmers, but this year money will be provided. Nevertheless, several times villages were notified in advance that an extension worker was coming, but when he arrived, he found no one had assembled the peasants." He called on those present to organize a meeting and ask for an extension worker. He himself would come if invited.

Finally, the school teacher who had read Suharto's speeches stood and made a few concluding remarks. "Until now we have not received any information (*penjuluhan*) about the proper use of the Bimas package. As a result, the yields have not been good and now the peasants are in debt to the government. They find it difficult to repay the credit and at the same time earn enough to meet their basic needs." He reminded the team members that Bimas stands for *bimbingan massal*, that is, guidance.

At this point, the meeting adjourned. After a brief lunch, we drove back to the kabupaten office. On the way, the team members talked about the meeting. One said, "The peasants know about modern farming techniques but only from books. They do not know how to apply this knowledge in their daily work. They want guidance." Another member remarked that the *kaum intelektual* (intellectual group), meaning the two school teachers, was certainly active in the meeting. Another said that Bimas was becoming a political issue; "One of the lurah who attended the meeting wanted a team sent to his village in order to convince the peasants to accept Bimas. The village was not on the bupati's list to receive Bimas for this dry season. The lurah thought that absence from the list meant that the bupati was dissatisfied with his past performance. Eager to correct this image, the lurah thought that a visiting team could persuade the peasants to continue with Bimas." They all chuckled because the lurah had looked rather bewildered and distressed after the meeting, because his constituents obviously did not back his request.

The official added that the bupati was not in fact disappointed with the lurah. The village had not been included because the farmers were still in debt from past Bimas programs.¹⁷

IV

The civil servants on the third trip differed from those on the first two trips. We drove to the ketjamatan and assembled in the meeting hall next to the tjamat's office. I had visited this ketjamatan eight months before in September 1969. Most of the villages here had participated at one time or another in the Bimas program and I had gone there to study the results. There are seven villages in the ketjamatan, and it is considered one of the most progressive and prosperous areas in the kabupaten. For the dry season of 1969, only one village had decided to participate in the Bimas program. The rest did not want to continue because they had found that Bimas participation did not bring a significant rise in production. They saw several reasons for this. The Bimas materials frequently arrived late or they were unsuitable for local conditions. In addition, the program was beset with administrative confusion because of problems encountered in credit repayment.¹⁸ Thus, except for this one village, the ketjamatan's peasants chose to remain outside the program.

In September 1969, I had visited the participating village. I was astonished by what I saw. The entire rice area of the village, over 100 hectares, had been cultivated using Bimas materials. Planting was done in May and June, so that when I arrived in September the rice plants were well above the ground though they had not achieved their full growth. Yet the stalks were not green, they were prematurely brown because of a lack of water. The entire crop was a total disaster because of draught. It was a strange sensation to drive along the road gazing at these fields where several months before peasants were painstakingly planting the seedlings row-by-row in the muddy *sawah*, which at that time was submerged in several inches of water. Now the critical ingredient, water, had vanished, exposing the parched cracked soil of the sawah floor. The peasants had also vanished from the scene. Their work in vain, they abandoned this crop to its predetermined fate. Now they would wait for the next planting cycle several months ahead.

17. Some bupati decided not to continue with Bimas if villages were in debt from former Bimas programs. They feared that continuation would make the debt so large that the government would never be repaid.

18. Adequate records had not been kept and there was much corruption or leakage of payments as they were channeled from the peasant up the bureaucratic hierarchy. It frequently occurred that the government had no way of knowing if the peasant had defaulted on the payments or if portions of the payments had been embezzled by the officials. Many peasants were resentful that government commissions had been inquiring to see if they had repaid the credit. They felt that the officials had not been consistent in recording their payments.

I went to the lurah's home and we discussed the Bimas program and its failure in his village. He explained, "We accepted Bimas on the understanding that we would receive a pump. There is a river about 500 yards from the village and the pump would feed water into the rice fields. We had always had a problem getting enough water in the dry season, and it would have been risky to accept Bimas without a pump. The promise of the pump gave us an added incentive to accept Bimas, namely the pump would be a permanent possession; also it would give some reasonable assurance that the Bimas project would succeed. However, when it came time to start the program, the Bimas materials came minus the pump. The pump never did come, and, because of draught, the crop will not be harvested." The lurah felt there would be no redress since the promise of the pump had not been written into the contract between the village and the government.¹⁹ I asked what the villagers would do without the income from the dry season crop. He said that many of the men would probably go to the city nearby and look for temporary employment. Many would work as *betjak* (pedicab) drivers.

This had been the scene in September 1969. At that time, peasants in the non-Bimas villages feared that persistent refusal to accept the program would not be tolerated and that in the near future they would be forced to participate. Now it was April, and I was visiting this same ketjamatan. Apparently some of the peasants had become more favorable to Bimas. I was alerted to this change of heart in March when I met with the extension worker from this area. He said that some wanted Bimas because he had been able to arrange a Bimas package which included a special pesticide highly valued by the peasants. In accompanying the kabupaten team I would have a chance to see whether in fact the peasants genuinely desired to try Bimas again.

The meeting hall had the standard features of such buildings and, at first glance, the twenty-five peasants seated inside lacked any distinctive characteristics that might have set them apart from other peasant groups in this mountainous region. The team joined the Muspida members seated in the front. The tjamat was absent on business in the city nearby. One of the visiting team members, a recent graduate of the tjamat school in Bandung and now an administrative assistant to the bupati, introduced his companions. Then another team member, an older man, who also worked in the buapti's office and had already served for many years as a tjamat, explained the objective of the Bimas program. He read for about fifteen minutes from the bupati's letter of instruction concerning the organizational and financial features of the Bimas program. Upon completing this statement, he talked about the problem of peasants not repaying the credit. "The debt is running into the millions of rupiahs and the governor wants to get this money back. A special committee has been set up to find out why the peasants are not paying. The investigation will look into the affairs of both peasants and officials." He reassured them that legal action would be taken against officials involved in corruption (*penjelewengan*).

19. There were numerous reports in 1969-1970 that villages had been promised pumps as part of their acceptance of Bimas but that the pumps had never arrived.

Then the agricultural official rose to speak. He emphasized that the peasant is responsible for improving his life and fulfilling the requirements of the *pantja usaha*. He stressed that measures should be taken to protect the rice plants before pests attack. Improved methods of planting and irrigation were explained and advice given on using fertilizer at the proper times and in the proper amount. He also urged the peasants to use the best seeds. The PN Pertani official gave a few brief remarks indicating that the peasants must improve the way in which they request Bimas help. Many of the applications had been submitted late. He was followed by the *tokoh tani*, who said that the government needed to increase production and this was the reason behind the Bimas program. At the same time, however, he intimated that the government had better introduce a more effective price support policy if it expected rice production to increase.

Then the question and answer period began. It lasted for about an hour. The first peasant to speak was exceptionally well dressed and well groomed. In the pocket of his new white shirt there was a gleaming ball point pen, the only one in evidence among the peasants. The forceful personality of this young man dominated the questioning. He spoke with ease about the finer technical points of farming, and one of the team members, obviously impressed, remarked in an aside to a companion that this was indeed a rare thing to witness. The young peasant proceeded to decry the fact that, even though the peasants received Bimas assistance, there still was little incentive to increase production. He firmly asserted several times that an increase in production was inextricably linked with a more favorable price support system. "Unless the government undertakes more effective action in this area, Bimas will not fare well. We, the peasants in this *ketjamatan*, must organize to fight for this goal."

A second peasant stood and asked that the amount of pesticide be decreased and the fertilizer allowance increased. The well-dressed peasant spoke up in support of this. He said the peasants were accustomed to using more fertilizer than they got through the Bimas program. He also requested that some aid be given to the villages to help meet the administrative costs of implementing Bimas.²⁰ "In the past, Bimas fertilizer was delivered at a point far from the village because the trucks could not traverse the village roads. It was difficult to find the financial resources to transport it to the village. In addition, the delivered fertilizer was frequently less than was promised. There was some leakage along the way. The *lurah* was supposed to record the loss so a claim could be submitted, but frequently he did not."²¹

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20. The government expected the peasants to pay these expenses; whereas the peasants demanded that the government share in the costs. The costs usually involved transport expenses, rental fees for a warehouse and a token salary for the unit leader and his assistants.
 21. There were numerous reports about fertilizer deliveries which were less than those prescribed for the program. Even after the fertilizer did arrive, some people took portions of it as a payment for services rendered in administering the program. The individual peasant frequently did not receive his full allotment.

The agricultural official responded that there was nothing he could do to alter the package in line with local preferences. He regretted to say that there were no funds available to defray village level administrative costs. He urged them to collect funds by rebuilding the farmer cooperative movement.²²

The well-dressed peasant, now openly perturbed over the lack of peasant organization, seemed to be directing his remarks more to the assembled peasants than to the team. He said that there was a definite need for some kind of peasant organization and it was about time something was done about it. "I do not identify with any particular political party, and I would like to see the peasants build an organization independent of the parties." Another peasant, an old shoeless fellow, wearing black pants and shirt, said that his village used to have a cooperative but it fell apart when the government devalued the currency in 1965. He went on to say that he was not particularly interested in receiving the Bimas credits because the contents of the package did not accord with his wishes. He asked that he might be made exempt from having to participate. One of the kabupaten officials sympathetically said that this request would be granted.

At this point, the meeting adjourned and for a brief period I talked with the well-dressed and outspoken peasant. He said that up until five years ago he had been an urban businessman. But then he decided to try his hand at commercial farming. He found it difficult to succeed given the lack of a favorable rice subsidy. He did emphasize, however, that in general the peasants in his area and those at this meeting wanted to try Bimas again. They liked the pesticides they were now receiving through Bimas. He said that the area's peasants were well educated and they felt they could make a profit with Bimas this dry season. He stressed, however, that they would not want to have Bimas in the wet season because the price of rice tends to decline during that period.

V

These three episodes provide some corrective to national level views of the peasants' response to Bimas. Some peasants did believe the program was helpful, but for the majority, it was an unwelcomed intrusion into their village economy. While the government bureaucracy was able to cow most of these peasants into accepting Bimas, this same bureaucracy was not sufficiently staffed to instruct and supervise them in the application of the new technology. As a consequence, yields continued to remain below the predicted targets and only a small portion of the credit extended by the government was being repaid.

The increasing unpopularity of Bimas, the disappointing yields and the losses incurred by the government treasury--all culminated in an incognito visit to the rice fields by Suharto in April 1970. This unprecedented action was an effort by Suharto to find the reality that ambiguous bureaucratic reports had shrouded in confusion

22. A government sponsored cooperative movement was started in Java in 1961. By 1968, for political and economic reasons, the cooperative movement was ineffective in most villages.

and misunderstanding. Disguised in the modest garb of an urban dweller, the President, along with several of his aides, visited villages in West and Central Java, talking informally about Bimas with individual peasants. It was soon apparent that the peasants harbored serious grievances towards Bimas. In the following month, Suharto made the crucial decision to abandon the current Bimas program. The official press statement justified the decision on grounds that the government was now financially capable of operating its own program without the participation of foreign companies. Yet, few informed observers would deny that the decision really represented Suharto's loss of confidence in the merits of the Bimas program. This must have been a difficult decision for the President, who has taken a personal interest in Bimas. His government had extolled the virtues of the program. Many officials seemed confident that the massive infusion of fertilizer and other materials plus the assistance of the foreign companies would turn the tide in rice production in Indonesia. But only a year later, these hopes were dashed.

The significant issue now concerns reform of the program and devising new policies to boost rice production. In June and July, higher level government officials were busily engaged in preparing a new Bimas program for the oncoming wet season, which began in September and October 1970. The urgency of this deadline and the awesome task of achieving the 1973 self-sufficiency goal loomed large in the minds of these men. Such pressures did not exactly provide the most desirable environment for carefully reviewing and formulating new programs. The new program that did emerge contained some definite improvements. Most importantly, instead of relying exclusively on central planning and the public bureaucracy, the government was now willing to leave some initiative to the peasant and to allocate the Bimas materials through the open market.²³ This represents an important concession and expands the opportunity for the peasant to adapt the services of the new Bimas program to his own particular needs. Nevertheless, the size of the Bimas program remains massive and government agencies have yet to demonstrate their capacity to implement it. One cannot predict the outcome with any confidence. The issue still hangs in doubt as to whether the Indonesian government can break with its past record of ill-starred performance and achieve self-sufficiency by 1973.

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23. One still outstanding issue concerns the price support policy for rice production, an issue of great concern to the peasants. In the spring of 1970, the government was introducing policies to establish the basic framework for a subsidy program, but the administrative problems involved in this program are formidable and it remains to be seen if these policies will provide a greater incentive for increasing rice production.

